

TEACHER NOTES

Session 1:	A POSITIVE START TO HIGH SCHOOL	(some tips from Positive Psychology)
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Introduction:

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of what makes people do well in life. This includes school, home with friends and in other situations. Some of the ingredients for a happy life which science has discovered are:

- Using your natural abilities or talents,
- Connecting positively with others,
- Doing things to increase your positive thoughts and feelings
- Being kind to others and grateful for what you have and
- Learning to pay attention to what is going on around you - “being in the moment”.

Positive Psychology focuses on building the habits which make life worth living. The habits you have now - have been built over a long time. If you are a happy person and contented with how things are going then you have practiced good habits. These will include:

- **Trying your best.** Its important to achieve things in life but you don't have to BE the best you just need to TRY your best.
- **Treating the people in your life well.** These people may include your friends, family, teachers, neighbours, sporting team mates, coach etc. Treating them well may include: helping them, being thoughtful & kind to them. This also means being fair and showing respect to people who you may not like.
- **Having fun.** Doing things that make you feel good inside is very important. This may include: keeping fit, playing sport, playing music, dancing, singing, writing poems, doing art, going for a surf, skating, telling jokes, going camping, walking, reading, seeing a movie, writing a story.

Sometimes things happen that make life difficult. Sometimes we don't have much control over those things. Like parents deciding to move house or stop living together or someone who special to you dies. These things happen to everybody to some degree or another. But some people have better ways to manage when things get tough. Positive Psychology can also help us to get through those times of change. The way habits form and the way they influence our life is demonstrated in this saying:

***Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.
Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.***

By doing this you will build the “**Habits of Happiness**”.

Read: the Road to High School. Ask students to write down a few changes they have gone through. Have them to think about some that were easy and some that were hard. Maybe some were a bit of both.

Identify people who have helped you along the road. What did they do? What qualities did these people have?

Tick your natural abilities and add some of your own.

TIP: Often the **FEELINGS OF CONFIDENCE** only come after the **ACTIONS OF CONFIDENCE**. So there are some things we need to do even if we feel like avoiding them. It will be rewarding to take the challenge, sit with your feelings and succeed.

Read: the part (s) of the wheel which match your main areas of strength. Think about areas that you would like to improve.

List: 5 ingredients for happy life and 5 for success in life.

Discuss or Debate: Are happiness & success the same? Is Happiness or Contentedness the Purpose of Life.

Read: "Happiness comes from using your skills and abilities."

Answer: No Pain No Gain exercise. Can you think of more?

TIP: Doing what you are naturally good at is fun. Think of ways you use your natural skills & abilities at school. Can you think of more?

Discuss: the diagram about thoughts, actions & habits.

Think: of some other tips to build good habits.

Share: some examples of good habits you have and how you got motivated to put the work in to developing it.

List: some of your good habits and some of your bad ones.

TIP: Think of your habits as a personal bank account. You have to make more **DEPOSITS** than you make **WITHDRAWALS**.

Keep promises to yourself.	Break personal promises
Use your talents	Ignore your talents
Be honest	Fool yourself
Be kind to yourself	Beat yourself up

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GETTING IN THE FLOW

Going to High School can be a very exciting time. There is so much to look forward to. But just like the excitement you get before a big performance, a sporting contest or music exam it often comes with some stress and worry. Even good changes like going on a big holiday cause the kind of stress. The good news is that **THIS IS NORMAL**. This stress is what motivates us to perform at high levels.

If you are good at something and the task is too easy you get bored. If you are not so good at something and you get pushed too hard you may give up. But when the pressure is just right for your skill level – you get ‘in the zone’ that is called a state of **FLOW**.

What activities get you in a state of Flow? (we have many match your natural abilities listed earlier)

STRENGTH SPOTTING

The activities that get you in the **flow** are usually good clues to your **natural strengths**. Can you spot the natural strengths in your friends and classmates? What about your teachers? Use the list of strengths below and see if you can think of a positive statement for each of the other students in your class. Think about your teacher too.

It's generally easy to spot strengths in your friends because you know them well and you like them. It's harder to spot strengths in people you don't know well. And it's hardest of all to spot strengths in people you don't like.

It's a sign of growing up and maturity if you can accept that people are different from you. If you can spot strengths in people you don't actually like then you are growing into a mature person.


So look for strengths everywhere and you'll be surprised what you find.

ACTIVITY: Write a positive statement about each of the other members of your class which focuses on their good qualities and strengths. For what good qualities you will remember them for. (See strengths list at the end of this book)

STRENGTH	EXAMPLE
Appreciation	Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence or skilled performance in all aspects of life
Bravery	Not shrinking from threat, challenge or difficulty
Cautious	Not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
Creativity	Thinking of new and productive ways to do things
Curiosity	Taking an interest in experiences
Enthusiasm	Approaching life with excitement and energy
Fairness	Treating all people the same according to a sense of equality and justice
Forgiveness	Forgiving those who have done wrong
Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for good things that happen
Honesty	Speaking the truth and being genuine
Hope/Optimism	Expecting the best and working to achieve it
Humour	Being able to laugh and joke and bring smiles to other people
Kindness	Doing favours and good deeds for others
Leadership	Organising group activities and making sure they happen
Love	Building close relationships with others
Love of learning	Mastering new skills, topics and knowledge
Moderesty	Letting your accomplishments speak for themselves
Open-mindedness	Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
Persistence	Finishing what you start
Perseverance	Being able to provide wise advice to others
Self-control	Controlling what you say and do
Resiliability	Being aware of the motives and feelings of yourself and others
Spirituality	Believing in the higher purpose and meaning of life
Teamwork	Working well as a member of a group or team

5 Rules for a Happy Life

Know what you stand for and be brave enough to be yourself:



- Use your natural talents:** - You all have different talents. So discover what your natural strengths are and find ways to use them at home, with your friends and at school.
- Connect positively with others:** The most important aspect of a your life is who you connect with. Caring genuinely for our friends & family in bad times as well as good is one of the important rules for being happy.
- Positive thoughts & feelings:** Positive thinking can be learned and positive emotions can be trained. Positive thinkers find more opportunities, attract other positive people and enjoy life. Doing things to promote positive emotions helps us stay calm and handle it better even when things go wrong.
- Be Kind & Grateful:** People enjoy life more when they are grateful for what they have rather than focusing on what they don't have. If you focus more on being kind to others than on yourself this brings its own rewards to you.
- Be in the Moment:** If you learn to focus your mind in the present instead of worrying about the past or the future you will see things you might otherwise miss. Learn to enjoy the little things in life and there will be no shortage of happiness.

Read: “Getting in the flow”.

Point out that excitement stress and anxiety are the flip sides of the same thing. A bodily reaction to your circumstances. This is normal. In science stress is another name for a force. Stress causes things to move, bend, be flexible and sometimes to break. Without stress we couldn't build or achieve anything. In people its what motivates us. But too much breaks or will.

List: some activities that get you in the flow.

Spot: strengths in yourself by seeing what gets you in the flow. Spot strengths in your friends and enemies too.

TIP: If you get butterflies you need to train them to fly in formation.

ACTIVITY: Ask students to look at the list of strengths. Clarify what each strength means. Have students nominate people who might demonstrate these skills (eg: Cadel Evans – Perseverance).

Give each student some squares of paper. Ask each student to write the name of another student in the class on a square and then also write a strength which matches them from the list.

Then ask students to write a message to that other student which is serious, encouraging. It can be something they admire about the other student and / or a fond memory.

Encourage as many as you can throughout the week. These must be handed to the teacher who vets them. They can be saved and handed out at an appropriate time later in the week or term.

Place **POSTER** on the wall in the classroom alongside the **STRENGTHS LIST**

Refer back to them when working through other transition activities in the term. Eg: Persistence when doing timetable or Optimism when considering daunting aspects of High School.